Outside the System

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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URGENT ACTION
January 5, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: PHIL ODEEN

SUBJECT: Secretary Laird's Memo to the President Dated December 26, 1972 Proposing Changes in U.S. Strategic Policy

Secretary Laird has sent a memorandum to the President enclosing the results of the DOD strategic target policy study conducted over the last year by a special panel chaired by Johnny Foster (Tab D). The memorandum encloses two documents:

-- A draft nuclear weapons employment policy. Laird proposes that this take the place of the national strategic targeting and attack policy (NSTAP). It provides a new conceptual framework as well as guidance for the development of flexible response options.

-- The report of the Foster Panel. This addresses overall aspects of U.S. nuclear policy and provides a broader framework for the proposed employment policy. It proposes replacing NSDM 16 with a new NSDM which would cover strategic objectives, strategic employment policy, nuclear weapons acquisition policy and civil defense. The report also outlines a new declaratory policy and a revision of DOD's defense policy planning guidance to accompany the NSDM.

An analytical summary of both papers and the issues they raise is attached (Tab C). This memo outlines the key issues and suggests the next steps to be taken.

Key Issues

Both documents are high quality work. Together they represent major steps toward the development of flexible response options and a more coherent and consistent strategic policy. However, there are some

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important gaps and major unresolved issues.

-- While the major attack options and large scale selective options are the subject of detailed guidance, the more limited options and the regional attack options get only general treatment and remain to be filled in. These more limited options are potentially the most interesting from the standpoint of actual use in any severe crisis and deserve full attention in any planning guidance.

-- The question of the extent to which we should buy forces to support our employment policy is addressed but not resolved by the Foster Panel report. The report originally contained an annex examining this problem in detail and providing policy alternatives but it was not forwarded with Laird's memorandum to the President. The relationship between weapons acquisition policy and employment policy is a major issue affecting our strategic posture left over from the McNamara years. It was the main focus of our strategic objectives study and a central aspect of any comprehensive strategic policy. It needs to be addressed at the same time as Laird's other proposals -- otherwise we will be buying a pig in a poke.

-- The report also raises a major question as to the line to be drawn between national policy promulgated by the President and the policy responsibilities of the Department of Defense. The draft NSDM sets forth a number of policy objectives many of which can be conflicting. It is the task of policy to resolve such conflicts by indicating emphasis and priority among objectives. In the Foster report many of these crucial specifics are left to the discretion of OSD and the JCS.

The Bureaucratic Situation

Laird wants these proposals to be given prompt attention in the National Security Council before he and Johnny Foster leave the scene. (He is sufficiently anxious to proceed that he may seek to take this up directly with the President.) While his haste is understandable the proposals clearly need more work and more careful examination so that their implications can be fully understood. The gaps should be filled in, several major ambiguities need to be resolved, and careful attention needs to be given to the question of our declaratory policy and the relationship of any new policy to our NATO strategy.

At the same time we should move quickly. This is an unprecedented opportunity to develop an overall policy for a vital national security issue which for too long has been out of the President's control. We therefore should take advantage of the momentum of this effort before it is dissipated by a new cast of players in DOD.

Next Steps

I believe the next step should be to establish a select ad hoc group under the DPRC to review, revise and complete the employment policy and overall strategic policy guidance. This group should be chaired by the NSC staff and composed of representatives in the Department of Defense and one representative each from State and CIA. As your schedule permits you should get a full briefing on the details of the study and we should have a restricted DPRC meeting to focus high level attention on Laird's proposals and give this exercise status in the interagency process.

I have prepared a memorandum for the President (Tab A) briefly summarizing the Laird memorandum and indicating your plans to establish the ad hoc group. A memo from you to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of CIA setting up the ad hoc group is at Tab B. The memo to the President also includes a draft letter to Laird thanking him for his efforts.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memorandum to the President at Tab A, and the memo establishing the ad hoc group at Tab B.

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Secretary Laird's Recommendations On U.S. Strategic Policy

Secretary Laird has sent you a memorandum recommending major changes in U.S. strategic policy. His memorandum encloses:

-- A draft nuclear weapons employment policy calling for more flexible and limited options for the use of nuclear weapons in the event deterrence fails.

-- A report from a special Department of Defense panel chaired by Dr. John Foster recommending a new statement of overall strategic policy.

Secretary Laird would like these recommendations given prompt attention in the National Security Council before he and Dr. Foster depart. His sense of urgency is understandable, and we also have an interest in not letting this important effort lose momentum. It provides an unprecedented opportunity to gain a measure of control over a vital area of national security policy, which for too long, has been unresponsive to Presidential direction.

Nonetheless the draft policy guidance is not sufficiently developed for your consideration and decision. While these proposals represent a major step toward a more flexible strategic posture and the work contained in them is of quality they nonetheless need a thorough review before their full implications will be clear. Moreover several important gaps need to be filled in and certain major issues need to be explored.

As the next step I plan to establish an ad hoc group responsible to the Defense Planning Review Committee with the objective of reviewing

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the proposals and making appropriate revisions in order to complete them for consideration by the DPRC and the NSC. Because of the sensitivity of the subject, participation would be restricted to my staff, the Department of Defense, State and CIA. I also plan for an early meeting of the DPRC on a restricted basis to focus high level agency attention on these proposals.

I have enclosed a brief letter from you to Secretary Laird thanking him for his valuable efforts on this subject. I recommend your signature.

_____ Approve letter to Secretary Laird

_____ Other

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: Proposed Changes in U.S. Strategic Policy

The Secretary of Defense has proposed a number of important changes in U.S. strategic policy. These include:

-- New policy guidance for the employment of nuclear weapons, and

-- A new statement of overall U.S. strategic policy.

The President wants to give these proposals priority attention. Accordingly a special ad hoc group will be established under the Defense Planning Review Committee for this purpose. It will be chaired by Mr. Philip Odeen of my staff with appropriate representation from the Department of Defense and one representative each from the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency.

The ad hoc group will review the material provided to the President by the Secretary of Defense as well as any supporting material that may be relevant including the analysis of nuclear weapons acquisition policy identified in the report to the Secretary of Defense by the Panel to Review U.S. Policies for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons.

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Please have your representatives on the ad hoc group notify Mr. Odeen.

Henry A. Kissinger

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Analytical Summary
DOD Targeting Study Results and Proposals

Secretary Laird's memorandum to the President of December 26, 1972, encloses the results of the DOD Strategic Target Policy Study conducted by a special panel chaired by Johnny Foster. Laird's memo contains:

-- A Draft Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy which provides guidance on planning more flexible strategic options and which is to take the place of the present National Strategic Targeting and Attack Policy (NSTAP).

-- The Report of the Foster Panel on overall aspects of U. S. nuclear policy including a recommended new NSDM to replace NSDM 16, an outline of a new declaratory policy and a revision of the Pentagon's Policy Planning Guidance (DPPG).

This paper summarizes the main points of the Draft Employment Policy and the Report and identifies the major issues that need attention in the course of further NSC considertion.

I. Draft Employment Policy

Background

The initial objective of the DOD study was to examine our current national strategic targeting policy (NSTAP) and to develop appropriate modifications aimed at providing more flexible strategic response options. The study resulted from pressure generated by the DPRC Strategic Objectives Study which made clear that our policy towards the employment of nuclear forces is an essential ingredient which had been missing in our study of the U.S. nuclear posture.

Current U.S. employment policy is contained in the National Strategic Target Attack Policy (NSTAP), a document given to SAC by the JCS. It is the basis for the development for the SIOP. At present the NSTAP does not relate to Administration strategic guidance (i.e., NSDM 16), which

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essentially deals with weapons acquisition not weapons use. It also fails to provide the the flexible options called for in various Presidential statements. The current NSTAP has changed little from the original policy paper prepared by McNamara's staff in the early 1960s although the strategic situation has changed radically.

The NSTAP objectives are threefold:

-- To destroy the Soviet and PRC nuclear offensive capability (SIOP Task Alpha).

-- To destroy the Soviet and PRC military target system (SIOP Task Bravo).

-- To cause heavy damage to the enemy's industrial base supporting the war effort and its urban-industrial (U/I) centers (SIOP Task Charlie).

The shortcomings of this policy are obvious. Its only objective is to win the nuclear war by destroying the enemy. There is no effort to control escalation or plan for limited options. Moreover, no consideration is given to the great uncertainty that exists as to how a war might begin -- the assumption is that one side or the other launches a major attack, perhaps the least likely scenario.

OSD Draft Nuclear Weapons Employment

The new draft Employment Policy is a radical departure from the current targeting policy -- in substance as well as format. The main difference is this: the current policy tries to win a nuclear war through destruction of the enemy's force and military capability and to limit damage to the U.S. through counter force attacks. The new proposed policy aims at trying to stop the war quickly and at a low level of destruction. Damage to the U.S. is to be limited by controlling escalation. The new policy also deals with all offensive nuclear weapons -- tactical and theater as well as strategic weapons, the NSTAP dealt only with strategic forces.

The first major objective of the new policy -- control of escalation -- is to be accomplished in several ways:

-- Establishing escalation boundaries, e.g., types of weapons, type targets, and launch location.

-- Deterring enemy escalation by ensuring we retain a highly survivable counter-value capability which can destroy the industrial base of the Soviet Union. This is called the "Swing Force" in the new draft policy.

-- Avoiding instability (i.e., pressures "use of lose" nuclear forces in the course of any exchanges) by tailoring targeting tasks to the appropriate type of weapon (e.g., bombers should not be used for the counter value reserve since they are not survivable for an extended period). This is designed to provide "trans-attack stability", i.e., minimize pressure to escalate.

-- Avoiding destruction of the enemy's key national command-control facilities to ensure he can control escalation and not resort to "automatic" responses.

The second major element of the new policy is guidance for the situation where efforts to prevent escalation fail. In this case, our forces would be used to minimize the enemy's residual military power and recovery capability and not simply destory his population and industry. The objective is to enhance our relative post-war power and influence. Thus, the emphasis is not on inflicting urban/industrial damage for its own sake but on destroying those assets essential to post war recovery -- including military personnel which would form the backbone of organized rebuilding efforts. Just what targets fit this criteria is not clear and the new guidance calls for further study of this issue.

Weapons Allocation Priorities.

A key factor in having more flexible response options is how weapons are allocated to targets. How this allocation is made determines whether we have enough of the right kind of weapons to carry out flexible options, to provide for a counter value reserve deterrent, and to ensure sufficient weapon survivability to provide trans-attack stability. Currently, we allocate most of our weapons against nuclear targets (e.g., silos) regardless of their survivability characteristics or whether we would be retaliating or pre-empting.

Under the new proposal there would be a sharp distinction between weapons priorities for the options based on normal, day-to-day alert with damage (essentially retaliatory options) and a generated alert option without damage (essentially a pre-emptive strike). The table below compares the weapon assignment priorities for the current policy with the proposed policy.

Weapons Assignment Priorities

Priority	Current Policy Retaliatory or Pre-Emption	New Policy Retaliatory	New Policy Pre-Emption
1	Strategic nuclear targets	Counter value	Counter value
2	Counter value targets	Command/ Control	Nuclear forces including hard silos
3	General purpose forces	GP forces and non-silo nuclear targets	Command/Control
4	N/A	Hard silos	GPF targets

This is not the order in which targets would be struck but the priorities followed in allocating weapons to the target array. For example, the counter value targets would get first call on weapons. Thus, those weapons (probably SLBMs) that have "enduring survivability" would be allocated to the counter value mission even if they are suited or needed for strikes against nuclear threat targets. Should we pre-empt, this does not mean counter value targets would be struck first in a conflict -- rather, we would likely go after Soviet nuclear threats to us and our allies, withholding survivable counter value capability to deter the Soviets from escalating the conflict or hitting our cities.

Attack Options

Recognizing the uncertainty over how a nuclear conflict might start, the new draft policy prescribes a wide range of options which fall into four basic classes.

1. Major Attacks -- These are the large war attacks along the line of the current SIOP. There are four options (M1) major Soviet and East European GPF and nuclear military forces; (M2) the first option plus counter value political and economic targets; (M3) and (M4) the same two options but for the PRC rather than the USSR. There are withholds that can exclude targets collocated with major urban areas, targets in any specific country, Moscow and Peking and overlight of the USSR (in the PRC only options).

2. Selected Attack Options -- There are 12 such options. They make a somewhat greater effort to control escalation. The selected attacks are smaller packages of the targets in the major options. Coupling these selected packages with various withholds should provide boundaries to discourage escalation. In addition to withholds discussed above a withhold is specified so the enemy's attack assessment facilities might be preserved intact to enable him to determine the limited nature of the attack. In all cases, a reserve to carry out the counter value task would be maintained, using survivable forces to discourage the enemy from a major attack on our cities.

The selected attack options spelled out in the guidelines are:

(S1) Soviet nuclear threat to the U.S.
(S2) The nuclear threat to NATO.
(S3) The nuclear and conventional air threat to NATO.
(S4) The conventional ground force threat to NATO.
(S5) The naval threat to NATO.
(S6) Nuclear defense of NATO without using CONUS based forces.
(S7) Soviet nuclear threats to our forces and allies in Asia.
(S8) Soviet conventional threat to our forces and allies in Asia.
(S9) Soviet air defenses.
(S10) PRC nuclear threats.
(S11) PRC national civilian and military controls.
(S12) PRC conventional threat to U.S. forces and allies.

3. Limited Options -- A wide range of limited options are also possible. However, the draft guidance does not really come to grips with this category in the specific terms used for Major and Selected Options. It states that Limited Options should be possible drawing on selected parts of the above options. It also states that these options depend heavily on the scenario, require more study and may in large part depend on circumstances at the time of war initiation. To facilitate development of limited options a special planning staff would be established in the JCS to study and prepare preplanned limited options and design ad hoc options as required in a crisis.

4. Regional Options. These are options in which threats to any region are counted by strikes from U.S. nuclear forces in that region. As in the case of Limited Options the guidance is not specific. It directs the JCS to prepare general plans for attacks on deployed enemy forces, their local control, reserves, reinforcements and support facilities. The

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JCS is to develop a capability for rapid preparation assessment and execution of such options. Detailed plans which need to be developed just prior to launch will be made by the regional commanders.

The guidance provides that general plans should be made for strikes in three circumstances: in response to Soviet nuclear attacks, after a prolonged conventional war and after a short war. Planners should assume a high degree of control by the National Command Authorities. Every effort should be made to minimize collateral civilian damage through target restriction and choice of weapons. The enemy's control over its tactical nuclear forces should be left intact to avoid automatic responses.

Damage Criteria

Another major change in the policy is to downgrade the required damage expectancy, particularly against hard silo targets. This should result in a substantial freeing of resources for other tasks. Damage expectancy will normally not exceed 90%. (It now can go as high as 98%. For hard targets, the difference can mean a saving of several weapons per target since each weapon makes a decreasing contribution to damage expectancy at such high probability levels.) Fatalities from radiation will be considered for the first time in damage calculations. This will be one yardstick used for avoiding collateral nuclear damage in Limited Options.

The Role of the JCS

The JCS is given primary responsibility to fill in the gaps in the proposed target policy for presentation to the President and the Secretary of Defense. This includes:

-- The size and composition of the swing (reserve) force;

-- Evaluation of the effectiveness utility and risks of the Major Options and Selected Options;

-- The rationale for all pre-planned Limited Options;

-- The effectiveness of Regional Options.

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II. Report to the Secretary of Defense on Strategic Policy

The second document contained in Secretary Laird's memo to the President is a report of the Foster panel on overall strategic policy. The report attempts to examine the proposed employment policy in the larger strategic policy framework. To this end it examines four major elements of strategic policy.

-- Our strategic objectives.

-- Our employment policy (i.e., targeting policy).

-- Our nuclear weapons acquisition policies.

-- Our arms control policies.

The report also looks at three other related policy issues: our declaratory policy, the relationship of our strategic policy to NATO strategy and forces, and the relationship of the new proposed employment policy to our civil defense posture.

The report concludes by proposing a new NSDM on strategic policy covering all these points (Appendex A), a revision in the Defense Program Planning Guidance (Appendex B-II), and an outline for our position on declaratory policy (Section C, p. 32).

Strategic Objectives

The report gives considerable attention to our strategic objectives critiquing NSDM 16 and suggesting a revised statement of our strategic objectives.

It points out that NSDM 16 is essentially a statement relating to acquisition policy and that the sufficiency criteria are ambiguous, unachievable and out of date.

-- The first criteria of sufficiency (maintaining a high confidence second-strike capability) is ambiguous about the retaliatory target system and our strategic targeting objectives.

-- The second criterion (no first-strike incentive) is subject to differing interpretation which have not been resolved.

-- The third criterion (maintaining a capability to do more damage to the USSR than they can do to us) loses significance at the very high fatality levels of general war and is not feasible from the standpoint of fatalities if the Soviets evacuate their cities. Moreover, this objective if translated into targeting policy could conflict with other desirable targeting objectives (i.e., limited options) which might have priority over urban industrial attacks.

-- The fourth criterion (ABM defense) requires revision to reflect the ABM treaty and to include continental air defense.

The recommended statement of our broad strategic policy objective generally accords with the objectives that have been outlined in the President's Annual Report. They include deterring nuclear attacks against the U.S. and its forces; helping deter attack, conventional or nuclear, by nuclear powers against the U.S. and its Allies; and preventing coersion of the U.S. and its Allies by nuclear powers.

The report, however, adds several other specific objectives designed to lay the basis for the new employment policy:

-- If deterrence fails, to assure a U.S. position of power and influence and to limit damage to the U.S. and its Allies by the control of escalation.

-- To the extent escalation cannot be controlled, to maximize the resulting economic and military power of the U.S. relative to the enemy in the post-war period by striking critical recovery assets, by limiting damage to the U.S. (through counterforce attacks) and by maintaining a reserve force for post-war protection and coersion.

-- To promote nuclear stability in force postures and in crises through measures designed to deny significant enemy advantages in striking first; a clear capability to counterbalance destabilizing actions by our adversaries [sic] and structuring U.S. forces so they cannot be interpreted by the Soviets as threatening a disarming attack.

The full implications of these objectives are not clear. The report proposes that they be given operational significance in the Defense Policy Planning Guidance which is the preserve of the Secretary of Defense. Whether this is desirable from the President's viewpoint is a major issue.

Acquisition Policy

There is an extensive discussion of the relationship of our acquisition policy -- i.e., the deciding on forces we should develop and deploy -- in relation to our strategic objectives and our employment policy. The report states that a fundamental question is the extent to which forces which we are developing and buying should over time support the objectives of the employment policy. The question is fundamental because of likely conflicts between weapons systems acquisition policy based on our war plans and other policy elements including budget constraints. The report points out that, while we want as much capability as possible to implement our employment policies, fiscal, arms control and stability considerations make it clear that acquisition policy cannot be based solely on employment policy.

The report comes to no net conclusions on this issue. It notes that there is an annex to the report in which the problem is examined in detail in alternative options are laid out. However, this analysis of acquisition policy is not contained in the version sent to the President by Secretary Laird. In fact, the proposed new NSDM forwarded by Laird leaves a blank space for acquisition policy.

Acquisition policy is an essential ingredient of any coherent and reasonably comprehensive strategic policy. Developing such a policy was, in fact, one of the primary goals of the Strategic Objectives Study. The report suggests that this issue is something that should be addressed in the Defense Policy and Planning Guidance. This would effectively remove this key issue from control by the President. This issue should be included in any further work in the DPRC framework if we are to develop a fully comprehensive strategic policy.

Arms Control

Arms control considerations are given relatively brief attention largely because they do not impact directly on employment policy, and more importantly because they are more greatly affected by acquisition policy issues which are not resolved in the panel report.

Theater Forces and Declaratory Policy

The report states that it is important to share our new policies with the allies and that they should be brought into its more detailed development.

The report also recommends that NATO strategy be appropriately revised to conform to the new policy. It is not clear what revisions would be necessary, but the whole concept of flexible response raises some important problems with our allies who tend to see it as a synonym for limited nuclear war in Europe and decoupling of U.S. strategic forces. Thus, there is a real question, which requires very careful study, whether we want to precipitate a strategic debate in the alliance at this time.

A similar issue is raised in regard to declaratory policy. The main features of a flexible response posture are outlined in our draft section on strategic forces for the President's annual review. There are good and sufficient reasons for going public with any new strategic concepts including enhancing the credibility of our deterrent in the eyes of our allies and adversaries alike. But the approach is somewhat different than that proposed by the report to the Secretary of Defense, and this area also requires further examination.

III. Key Issues

The main issue raised by the report is whether we are to have a strategic policy promulgated at the Presidential level embodying all the main elements -- strategic objectives targeting policy, acquisition policy and arms control -- in sufficient detail to shape our strategic posture. It may be highly desirable to give the right amount of coherence and consistency to a major national security question, which too long has been largely out of the control of the President.

The report by the Secretary of Defense and the draft targeting policy provide an unprecedented opportunity to develop such a comprehensive policy statement. However, they do not yet provide an adequate basis for the necessary decisions. There are not only gaps and important ambiguities in the proposed options, but there is no resolution of the key question of weapons acquisition policy and consequently no real tie-in with our arms control objectives. As noted previously, there are also some important subsidiary questions relating to declaratory policy and the way in which this policy should be handled with our allies. Finally, there is the question, raised in the report, as to whether this overall guidance should cover civil defense.